

Fact Sheet:

***Naegleria* Infection**

(nuh-GLEER-e-uh)

What is *Naegleria*?

Naegleria is an amoeba commonly found in the environment. Only one species of *Naegleria* has been found to infect humans, *Naegleria fowleri*.

Where is *Naegleria* found?

Naegleria fowleri is found worldwide. Most commonly, the amoeba is found in the soil and in warm, stagnant bodies of fresh water, such as lakes, rivers, and hot springs, unchlorinated swimming pools, and in warm water discharge pools from industrial plants.

How does infection with *Naegleria* occur?

Infections are rare. The amoeba enters the body through the nose and travels to the brain and spinal cord while the person is swimming underwater or diving.

Infection is most common during the dry, hot summer months, when the temperature is above 80° F and the water is warm.

What are the signs and symptoms of *Naegleria* infection?

Headache, fever, nausea and vomiting, stiff neck, confusion, lack of attention to people and surroundings, loss of balance and bodily control, seizures, and hallucinations are signs and symptoms of infection. *Naegleria fowleri* infection is also called primary amoebic meningoencephalitis (PAM). Symptoms worsen; infection usually results in death within 7-10 days.

Is there treatment for infection with *Naegleria*?

Yes; however, most cases are fatal if not diagnosed and treated immediately.

Can infection be spread from person to person?

No.

How can I prevent an infection with *Naegleria*?

- Do not swim or jump into warm, stagnant, fresh water, such as ponds or warm water discharge pools, or unchlorinated swimming pools.
- Do not swim in polluted water.
- Do not swim in areas posted as "No Swimming."
- Hold your nose, or use nose plugs when jumping or diving into water.

For further information on protecting yourself from recreational water illnesses, please visit www.healthyswimming.org.

Can I get *Naegleria* infection from my swimming pool?

No, as long as your pool is properly cleaned and chlorinated.

For more information:

1. Seidel JS, Harmatz P, Visvesvara GS, Cohen A, Edwards J, Turner J. Successful treatment of primary amebic meningoencephalitis. N Eng J Med 1982;306:346-48.
2. Visvesvara GS, Stehr-Green JK. Epidemiology of free-living ameba infections. J Protozool 1990; 37:25S-33S.
3. Visvesvara GS, Martinez AJ. Protozoa: free-living amebae. In: Infectious Diseases, Vol. 2. D Armstrong and S Cohen (eds). London: Mosby, 1999, pp. 33.1-33.6.

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. If you have any questions about the disease described above or think that you may have a parasitic infection, consult a health care provider